

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 333 342

CS 010 599

AUTHOR Snow, Mary B.; And Others
TITLE Assessing a Whole Language Program: A Five-Year Study.
PUB DATE Nov 89
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English (79th, Baltimore, MD, November 17-22, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Instructional Effectiveness; *Language Acquisition; Longitudinal Studies; Primary Education; Program Evaluation; Reading Centers; *Student Development; *Student Evaluation; *Whole Language Approach
IDENTIFIERS Cambridge Public Schools MA; Concepts about Print Test; Language Development Reading Test; Visual Cue Writing Sample

ABSTRACT

A longitudinal study evaluated the Cambridge Lesley literacy Project as implemented in the Longfellow School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Five years of data on the progress of all children from kindergarten through third grade in both the Spanish bilingual program and the standard program were gathered during twice-weekly visits to the "literacy center." Three instruments were used to gather the data: "Concepts about Print," "Language Development Reading Test," and "Visual Cue Writing Sample." Two brief profiles of very different learners demonstrated that the important element in documenting students' progress that they learn to read and write and how they learn to read and write, not when and in comparison to whom. Results, reported for only one cohort over a five-year period, indicated that: (1) given a generally supportive, developmental learning environment, children become competent readers by grade five or six, reading at levels appropriate to their ages; and (2) individual students' progress toward competence is dramatically uneven. (Five tables of data are attached.) (RS)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED333342

ASSESSING A WHOLE LANGUAGE PROGRAM:
A FIVE-YEAR STUDY

Authors:

Mary B. Snow
Mary Garry
Brenda S. Engel

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

25010599

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Brenda
Engel

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

The City, the School, and the Study

My plan today is to describe the context within which the Cambridge Lesley Literacy Project has taken place, the particular school in which the Evaluation Study has been conducted, and the assumptions about literacy learning and their implications for evaluation which have guided the study.

The city

Contrary to many people's impressions, Cambridge, Massachusetts, is far from being simply a university town. Although Harvard, MIT (and Lesley) are situated in the city, most of their faculty live outside it. Cambridge is a New England industrial city of about 100,000 people. It continues to welcome new immigrants. Its school population is around 7500, of whom 50.1 % are made up of those who are commonly classified as "minority" and 49.9 % "non-minority." There are thirteen elementary schools and about 5400 elementary school children. There are forty-six different primary language groups in the city and eight bilingual programs, of which the largest, in order of size, are Portuguese, Haitian, and Spanish, followed by two dialects of Chinese, Indian, Korean and Vietnamese. Roughly ten per cent of the school population has English as a second language, and this figure does not include children who have made a transition into monolingual classes or whose families prefer that they are in them from the start. The city has been cited in the national press for pioneering in the early 80's a successful program for voluntary desegregation known as "Cambridge Controlled Choice." There are many alternative programs within the schools from which to choose.

The school

The Longfellow School, the site of our Evaluation Study, was the pilot school for the Cambridge Lesley Literacy Project (which, since 1983 when it was founded, has taken root in eight of the elementary schools). Because we have reported on its nature and history at other conferences including the November 1987 NCTE, available in ERIC, we have decided not to repeat that story today. We do have a handout which contains a brief history and description of theory and practice of the project.

There are about five hundred children at the Longfellow School in grades K-8, around 25% of whom are in the Spanish bilingual program. The entire student body is a wonderfully diverse and rich cultural mix. The Evaluation Study, begun in 1984-85, has now collected five years of longitudinal data on the progress of all the children involved in the literacy project. This includes children from kindergarten through the third grade in both the Spanish bilingual and standard programs as they go up through the grades.

Both the Literacy Project and the Evaluation Study have enjoyed sound administrative support from the superintendent, the coordinator of primary education, and the principal of the school.

When the possibility of the literacy project was presented to the Longfellow primary teachers in the spring of 1983, they were asked for a year's commitment to bring their classes to the literacy center "twice a week. It was here that Don Holdaway set up two environments for developmental literacy learning, for "sharing" and "doing." Janet Palladino (who is in the audience today), our Early Childhood Resource Specialist with a special responsibility for at risk children, became the Literacy Center teacher. In the first environment, Holdaway, and as they became more confident, teachers engaged the children in shared reading of many forms of children's literature using enlarged texts. In the second, the children made their own self-regulated choices among a myriad of literate activities. When increased student registration cost the project one of its spaces in the second year, the teachers decided to conduct the shared reading in their own rooms, and continue to use the Literacy Center for the "doing." Thus the project began to become incorporated in classrooms. The principle of voluntarism has always been central, however, and many of the teachers have continued with basal programs and a fairly traditional structure to which they have added shared reading with a wide variety of texts from children's literature, and, more recently, daily writing.

Over the past five years, there have been opportunities for continuing and deepening understanding of theory and practice through inservice courses and institutes at Lesley College. Longfellow and other Cambridge teachers have been staff persons and presenters as well as participants at these and many other conferences.

The Evaluation Study has provided another opportunity for professional growth. Many of the teachers have participated in the study, gathering and studying children's work, and learning to tape and interpret taped readings. Two years ago, we offered a course on naturalistic research at Longfellow, open to Cambridge teachers and Lesley graduate students and a number of Longfellow teachers participated.

A year ago, a grant from the William T. Bingham Charitable Trust to put early writing at the center of the curriculum on a par with shared reading (something which was always intended but had not been actualized) brought a new impetus to teachers' involvement in developmental learning. In the first year, six classroom teachers participated, and this year, the entire primary unit of ten classroom teachers, kindergarten through grade three, has chosen to become involved.

And yet it would not be accurate to describe Longfellow as a "whole language school." Although the literacy center has provided a common hub of experience for the children who attend it regularly from kindergarten through the third grade, the extent to which developmental literacy learning practices are carried out in individual classrooms by individual teachers varies. However, we do feel that, overall and gradually, there has been considerable professional growth. As one with one foot in the college and one foot in the school community, I can testify how much I have learned from the children, the teachers and the collaborative process of the study itself.

The Evaluation Study

In describing the Evaluation Study, I first want to acknowledge our gratitude to the General Cinema Corporation whose support for the last three years, together with the generous contribution of some of our time by Lesley College, has made it possible. I want also to acknowledge how much I have learned from Brenda Engel, who is primarily responsible for its design.

It is a given that all children in the Cambridge public schools are subject to a regular standardized testing program. The Evaluation Study was undertaken to provide richer, more complete and descriptive data about progress towards literacy over time. We decided to use methods consonant with developmental, whole language theory. It might be helpful to review some of the assumptions about the reading/writing process inherent in that theory:

- *Literacy learning is an extension of language learning and begins virtually at birth.
- *Literacy learning is developmental, moving from clumsy approximations towards competence.
- *Literacy learning, like language itself, is inherently social, therefore it prospers within a community of learners.
- *Individual children learn at different rates and in different ways.
- *The impulse towards making meaning is at the heart of literacy learning.
- *Learning to read and write, like all learning, is basically in the hands of the learner.

Some implications for evaluation follow:

- *Evaluation of a developmental process like literacy learning should itself be developmental, i.e. longitudinal.
- *Assessment methods should take into account the strategies children bring to the task, especially the demand for meaning and the significance of self-correction.
- *Evaluation in the primary grades should be seen as "keeping track," thus descriptive rather than prescriptive.
- *Methods of assessment should involve reading and writing of whole texts, not the testing of isolated skills.
- *The best evidence of learning is direct evidence, i.e. documentation.
- *Assessment should always be used in the interests of the children being assessed.

In general, evaluation should be consonant with the ultimate purpose of the activity. The purpose of learning to read is to be able to read, to make available a whole universe of knowledge and experience. The purpose of learning to write is to be able to write - to express oneself and communicate to others. These are activities which provide human beings with meaning and joy throughout their lives as well as being a gateway to further education and progress.

Standardized achievement testing has tended to narrow that gate so only the elect can enter. To carry the biblical image further, one might say that standardized achievement tests have provided us a way to tell the sheep from the goats. That is a phrase which comes from a story about judgment. But if one looks at literacy learning as developmental, and literacy as something which all but a very few children can and should expect to attain in a literate society as surely as they learned to talk, then assessment must be turned around so that it is first and foremost helpful to the learners themselves. That should be its primary purpose. Secondly, it should help teachers make appropriate choices and decisions as they teach. Thus it should be imbedded in the teaching process to inform teachers as they work. Thirdly, of course, it should enable teachers (and children) to report to parents and interested others about progress.

The important thing is to document the progress. The important thing is to document that they learn to read and write and how they learn to read and write, not when and in comparison to whom. The concept of school failure has been based on a form of insidious comparison. We have found as we turn to our longitudinal data when faced with a child who may, at a given moment in time, be "below grade level" - whatever that means - that taking a developmental view of literacy learning in fact provides a startlingly different perspective on that particular child's learning. Brenda Engel will talk about that later on. First, however, Mimi Garry is going to describe the instruments we used in the Evaluation Study and their particular appropriateness for a whole language program.

The instruments I shall describe to you are three in number - Concepts About Print, Language Development Reading Test, and Visual Cue Writing Sample. I shall describe, and also illustrate them, with examples of one child's work.

Mary said a moment ago that standardized achievement testing has tended to be a narrow gate. That gate is also impersonal and arbitrary. No face, no voice leaps to mind when you read the scores, and the numbers yield no clues about how a child approached a given task, or what he or she was thinking while completing it. It is important, I believe, to reaffirm at the outset that all our instruments are observational, that the child is our informant throughout, and that the data we gather is as individual as the children themselves, rich and full of detail.

We administer Concepts About Print in the spring of the kindergarten year, and again near the end of Grade 1. Developed in New Zealand by Marie Clay, its purpose is to determine what a child understands about the concepts and conventions of written language: how a book is arranged, and how it "works."

The observer introduces a particular book to the child, Sand or Stones, saying, "I'm going to read you this story, but I want you to help me." The observer then reads the book to the child, interrupting the reading at prescribed points to ask prescribed questions that get at conventions such as 1-1 correspondence of spoken with printed words, directionality from line to line within a page and from one page to another, the identity and purpose of different punctuation marks, the identity of particular letters.

The child's actions and verbal responses are noted on the record sheet and a score from 1-24 given for the number of correct responses. A number, yes, but a number directly related to the child's observable behavior.

Certain concepts and features of print that do not stand out to the child as an emergent reader generally become apparent as that child moves into textual reading, and we can see that development when we administer the test for the second time at the end of Grade 1. And if we see, instead, the development or persistence of confusion - about the concept of directionality, for example, which we regard as crucial to the understanding of print, we know where the confusion is and how to help the child resolve it.

To show you what the record keeping looks like for this test, here is the score sheet for Tanya, age 6 years, 3 months in the spring of 1988.

Date: 4/13/88Name: T Age: 6

TEST SCORE

12/24Recorder: K. A Date of Birth: 1/3/82

STANINE GROUP

PAGE	SCORE	ITEM	COMMENT
Cover	1	1. Front of book	
2/3	1	2. Priest contains message	
4/5	1	3. Where to start	In general: T. did not attend to the priest, but was interested in the story and pictures.
4/5	1	4. Which way to go	
4/5	1	5. Return sweep to left	
4/5	1	6. Word by word matching	
6	1	7. First and last concept	
7	1	8. Bottom of picture	
8/9		9. Begin 'The' (Sand) or 'I' (Stones) bottom line, top OR turn book	
10/11		10. Line order altered	
12/13	1	11. Left page before right	
12/13		12. One change in word order	
12/13		13. One change in letter order	
14/15		14. One change in letter order	
14/15		15. Meaning of ?	
16/17		16. Meaning of full stop	
16/17		17. Meaning of comma	
16/17		18. Meaning of quotation marks	
16/17		19. Locate M m I i h (Sand), OR T t B b (Stones)	
18/19		20. Reversible words was, no	
20	1	21. One letter : two letters	
20	1	22. One word : two words	
20	1	23. First and last letter of word	
20	1	24. Capital letter	

We use the Language Development Reading Test, a miscue observation, near the end of the school year with every child who is "really," or textually, reading. There isn't time today to distinguish at great length between emergent and textual reading, but Tasha herself will illustrate the difference.

At the end of her first year in Grade 1, Tasha was an emergent reader. Where the Wild Things Are was a favorite story that she had heard many times. On this tape, made by Mary Snow, Tasha role-plays the reading of that story. Sticking to the meaning, page for page, her language is her own but is deeply Sendakian, close and getting closer to the actual text.

Listen and note that right there Tasha demonstrates the single most significant predictor of future reading competence - the ability to self-correct in the direction of meaning.

The Language Development Reading Test for oral reading was developed in 1978 by Dr. John McInnes, senior author of a major language development and reading program published by Nelson Canada in Ontario.

By the mid 1970s it was clear to many Canadian educators that reading is an interactive process in which a reader constructs meaning with whole text. Tests that fractionated language into component parts and tested knowledge of those parts in isolation destroyed the reading act, destroyed the centrality of meaning, and were therefore inappropriate to the assessment of reading competence.

Adapted, with the consent of Yetta Goodman, from the original Goodman Reading Miscue Inventory, the Language Development Reading Test is a miscue observation modified for use by the classroom teacher, and for the purposes of this project we have modified it further. We use the texts, narrative and expository selections intended for children in grades one through six. We have adapted the procedures for coding and for record keeping to meet our own needs.

The selections and suggestions for their use were the first of their kind to be published in Canada - perhaps in North America - and they are not perfect by any means. I know, because I worked on the material and demonstrated its use in workshops throughout the provinces, that the leveling is bumpy in places. We also learned a great deal about the relative real readability - not surface structure, but things like concept load and redundancy - between narrative and expository texts at a given level. Some of the expository texts are just too difficult. And all of us

ORAL READING APPRAISAL FORM

Student TASHA D.O.B. 1/03/82

Grade 1 Teacher — School —

Date of Reading Favorite Book read

Graded Text read Baby Bear & the Cookies Level 3

Accuracy rate: $\frac{\text{total words} - \text{total miscues} + \text{self-corrections}}{\text{total words}}$ 94

Meaningful Miscue rate: $\frac{\text{meaningful miscues}}{\text{total miscues}}$

a) total number miscues
b) miscues supportive of meaning 75

Self-Correction Rate: $\frac{\text{self-corrections}}{\text{total miscues}}$

a) total self-corrections
b) total miscues 44

Comprehension:

fragmentary: 1
partial: 2
fairly complete 3
full and complete 4 3

Comments:

who have worked on this project are aware that some of the selections are not relevant to the experience of our urban readers because of their rural content. Despite such drawbacks, the material has served us well and yielded valuable information for the past five years.

Basically, the observation goes like this. We ask a child to read aloud a few pages from a favorite story. While we're listening, we try to determine which of the Nelson texts are at about the same level. Then we ask the child to choose one of the selections at this level to read onto tape. We encourage the child to solve word problems without our help so that we can see how he or she goes about it, and we explain that we will ask the child to retell the story after the reading.

The child reads. We follow along on a reduced copy of the text. People vary in their documentation at this point. I document only what the tape will miss - how the child sits, or holds the text; nervous wiggles, if any; fingerpointing. I make jot-notes of the retelling, and tell the child I'm doing it, so I can amplify what the child says with open-ended questions.

Here is the miscue recording sheet for the selection that Tasha read at the end of her second year in Grade 1. The bad news is that she shouldn't have had to repeat the grade. The good news is that she became a healthy textual reader in her own time. I don't want to go into our coding system very much except to show you that it shows us her strengths and her strategies for constructing meaning with print. (Point out some features.)

The record sheet shows what we look for in this observation. The accuracy rate tells us whether the reading level of the selection is appropriate. For the best picture of a child's reading strategies we need an accuracy rate of 95% or above. The meaningful miscue rate helps us to determine whether the child expects and searches for meaning while reading. And the self-correction rate shows us the extent to which the reader notices loss of meaning and/or deviation from the text, and what he or she does about it. The comprehension check helps us to see what understandings the child drew from the text while reading it, and the evidence of reading strategies helps us to see how well the child balances the cue systems and revises predictions to preserve or regain meaning.

All language processes are related, and reading and writing are inseparable. So to observe the development of literacy in young children, one must collect samples of both.

When this project began, worksheet completion and writing assignments prescribed by topic were common, but the incidence of self-generated whole text was low. Feeling that some form of engaging stimulus was necessary as a prompt, Mary and Brenda adapted a diagnostic probe of children's writing, widely used in clinical settings, The Myklebust Picture Story Language Test. The picture referred to in the title was a black and white photograph from the early forties showing one white male child at play, and the task was to write a story about the photo.

In order to provide a more meaningful context for the writers of our contemporary and diverse population, Brenda replaced the original Myklebust picture with culturally relevant color photographs of book illustrations unfamiliar to the children. The task, essentially unchanged, was to choose and write a story about one photo from a collection of about twenty.

The writing sample has been administered by teachers to the whole class within one period of class time in early June. The instructions are: "Write a story about the picture... the best story you can. Take your time and don't worry about spelling or punctuation. They won't count." Children in bilingual and ESL classes are invited to write in their preferred language.

The resulting compositions are analyzed and scored by two, preferably three, readers, in several ways. Productivity is noted in terms of total words; total number of ideas, or sentences; and words per sentence. Content is determined along a continuum of 0-5 from concrete to complex. The scoring is not judgmental but descriptive. Here is Tasha's writing sample for June of 1989.

I pitk this

richr be cuse

it is a use ^{ness} and she

is talking to her

boy fred and her

boy fred is hasam

and she is prity

and her room is

prity and her cat

Introduction

Rather than keeping everyone in suspense, I'm going to start by telling the end of the story: "Does it work?"---or, perhaps better, "Did it work?" The answer is a highly qualified "yes"--qualified by the situation in which these particular children have learned and developed understanding. For those of us who believe in the importance of context--context in terms of teachers' beliefs and practices, children's knowledge and dispositions, school department and school-based administrators beliefs and mandates and parents wishes--the answer has to be qualified. Like all situations, it was not perfect and like all programs, neither the children nor the context can be replicated, can be overlaid like a transparency onto a different setting. Nonetheless, we believe that what has happened at the Longfellow School over the past five years has significant implications--which is why we're here.

The "variables" (which can also be called inconsistencies--sometimes I think of them as "waverables") are the common ones which Mary Snow has already described. Some are positive and some are negative. To justify our qualified "yes, it has worked" I want to offer two kinds of evidence--one qualitative, one quantitative. They go together but appeal to different parts of our intelligences: the first, the qualitative, responds to story, to the recognizable feelings evoked by accounts of an individual child's struggles and pleasures in becoming literate. No matter what is said in words, however, about a child's progress in learning, wherever numbers exist--as a score, for instance--parents, teachers, all of us, tend to give them--the numbers--more immediate attention and probably more weight for reasons which I won't go into now. The second kind of evidence, then, will be more like statistics or so-called "objective proof".

First, the stories:

Two brief profiles

I'm going to present two brief profiles of two very different learners. What they share is that they are both of mixed parentage and have a first language other than English. Otherwise they could hardly be more different. I've chosen them for reasons which will become clear, I hope, at the end of the profiles.

"Stephanie"

In describing Stephanie, I have to refer to Janet Palladino, the Early Childhood Resource Specialist at the school, to whom Stephanie is indebted for much of her education and I am indebted for the details and vividness of this account.

Stephanie began school at the youngest possible age, to the day, allowed within the Cambridge system. A child has to be 4 by March 31 in order to enter full day kindergarten the following fall. Stephanie's birthday is March 31. She came to kindergarten in September, 1978 at the age of 4 years five months.

Her home situation was fairly stressful: a hardworking mother, often exhausted because of holding two jobs to support the family--which included Stephanie and a brother one year older (another brother was born when Stephanie was in first grade). Her father was alcoholic. In addition to being chronologically young for kindergarten, Stephanie was also developmentally young and socially immature. According to Janet Palladino, her speech was still "telegraphic:" like a very young child, she used only the words absolutely necessary to convey the message: for instance, "Go bathroom." She was overweight, sensitive and eminently teasable--but nonetheless affectionate and open to adults.

Stephanie repeated kindergarten. At the end of two years of kindergarten, she still showed little interest in paper and pencil tasks. In grade 1 she was put on an education plan and began spending a half hour each day with Janet Palladino in the Literacy Center. Janet worked with Stephanie along lines similar to those later systematized and described by Marie Clay in Reading Recovery. She used Stephanie's natural appetite for story--she liked to be read to and make up her own stories--to build up a repertoire of favorite books and, in the process, emphasized prediction, rhythm, rhymes, and other characteristics of literature. Stephanie particularly loved Mrs. Wishy Washy.

By the end of grade 1, Stephanie began to show some interest in print. She was then an early, emergent reader, able to follow a story sequentially but was not word matching. At this point she was recommended for a special class but because of her mother's wishes and Janet's ongoing support, she remained in the standard program.

In the fall of her second grade year, Stephanie was reevaluated and found, by an outside medical consultant, to have an "attention deficit." She was put on Ritalin. Janet says there were times, thereafter, when she "appeared so dopey she could barely function." We have a dramatic demonstration of the effect of the drug in two oral reading samples done two days apart, April 14 and April 16, 1986. On the first occasion, Stephanie was "dopey" and read the most elementary text in the testing sequence with a low rate of self corrections and meaningful miscues. Two days later, she read a text two levels higher with 85% meaningful miscues and 50% self corrections--both of these unusually high ratios.

Some time in the middle of second grade, Stephanie learned to read. "It all came together," as Janet says--because of the Ritalin or in spite of it, depending on your point of view. I remember vividly meeting Stephanie in the hall that spring. She

knew me as the person who taped children reading aloud every once in a while and greeted me with great excitement. "Do you want to tape me reading today?" I certainly did want to.

Stephanie made steady progress from there on. By the end of third grade, she was reading appropriately for her age and grade and no longer needed special help---although, interestingly, she continued to need it in other academic subjects.

Stephanie was a slow, learner--slower than most--but that didn't mean she couldn't learn or learn in the same way other children learn, faster children. A much tested, diagnosed and medicated child, Stephanie's special quality, in Janet Palladino's words, is "resilience." Perhaps because of the deeply appreciative and intelligent help she received, she remained "sweet and happy and she loves to read." By "appreciative," I mean Janet's confidence in Stephanie--her recognition and appreciation of Stephanie's own character and abilities.

"Darshan "

Darshan is a different story-- the much adored only child of an Indian father and Ethiopian mother. His father, who very sadly died last year, was a Peugeot car mechanic. A slight, neatly built boy, Darshan entered kindergarten in 1984 when he was two months short of his fifth birthday. His kindergarten teacher, Charlene Morrison, remembers that year's class, whom she taught again in second grade, as a particularly wonderful class and Darshan as "one of the most fantastic kids" she ever had. He was quiet, reserved, almost formal--characteristics probably influenced as much by cultural as by family and personal factors.

Charlene describes Darshan as an interested, creative child with a sophisticated sense of humor, even in kindergarten. He would sometimes catch onto a joke that passed the others by--Charlene would see him giggling quietly to himself. In Charlene's words, he was a "true independent learner" right from the start.

This view is supported by a very moving audio tape made towards the end of his first grade year, of Darshan reading aloud a story, "Baby Bear." I often use this tape in training students to do miscue analysis. One can hear Darshan's voice, very precise, very clear, betraying just a slight hint of foreign accent-- "baby bear looked in the window"--and very determined. He is determined that the text make sense and he brings to bear on it every kind of knowledge at his disposal--of syntax, phonics, prediction, semantics and prior knowledge (of the story of Goldilocks); also the illustrations on which he comments at one point. His strategies based on this knowledge are seamlessly interwoven and virtually audible on the tape.

A high rate of both meaningful miscues and self corrections continue to characterize Darshan's oral reading on subsequent recordings. He progresses steadily, each year, to a more complex,

more difficult text. Last spring, in grade 4, he read a text we usually avoid giving students because of the difficult, usually unfamiliar, subject matter--northern lights. Darshan, a science buff and science fiction fan, had no trouble reading or retelling the content. There was a slightly complaining note by the tester on the score sheet: that, although Darshan read with expression, he read a bit too fast. I think perhaps the tester had difficulty following the text.

Charlene Morrison characterizes Darshan as "sweet and kind," and says that his classmates "adore him." The other word she used to describe him was "dignified."

So here we have two very different children and--returning to Mary's metaphor--the gate proved wide enough to let them both through.

III. Now for the numbers:

I'm going to show one group of graphs illustrating progress in reading increasingly difficult texts over a period of five years. We can make two positive statements on the basis of findings illustrated on the graphs:

1. Given a generally supportive, developmental learning environment, children become competent readers by grade five or six, reading at levels appropriate to their ages.
2. Progress towards competence is dramatically uneven; it goes in fits and starts

progress graphs:

Cohort 82--19 children in grades two-six, 1985-1989]

Limitation: show progress along only one dimension--text level; over 90% accuracy assumed (because prerequisite for text level).

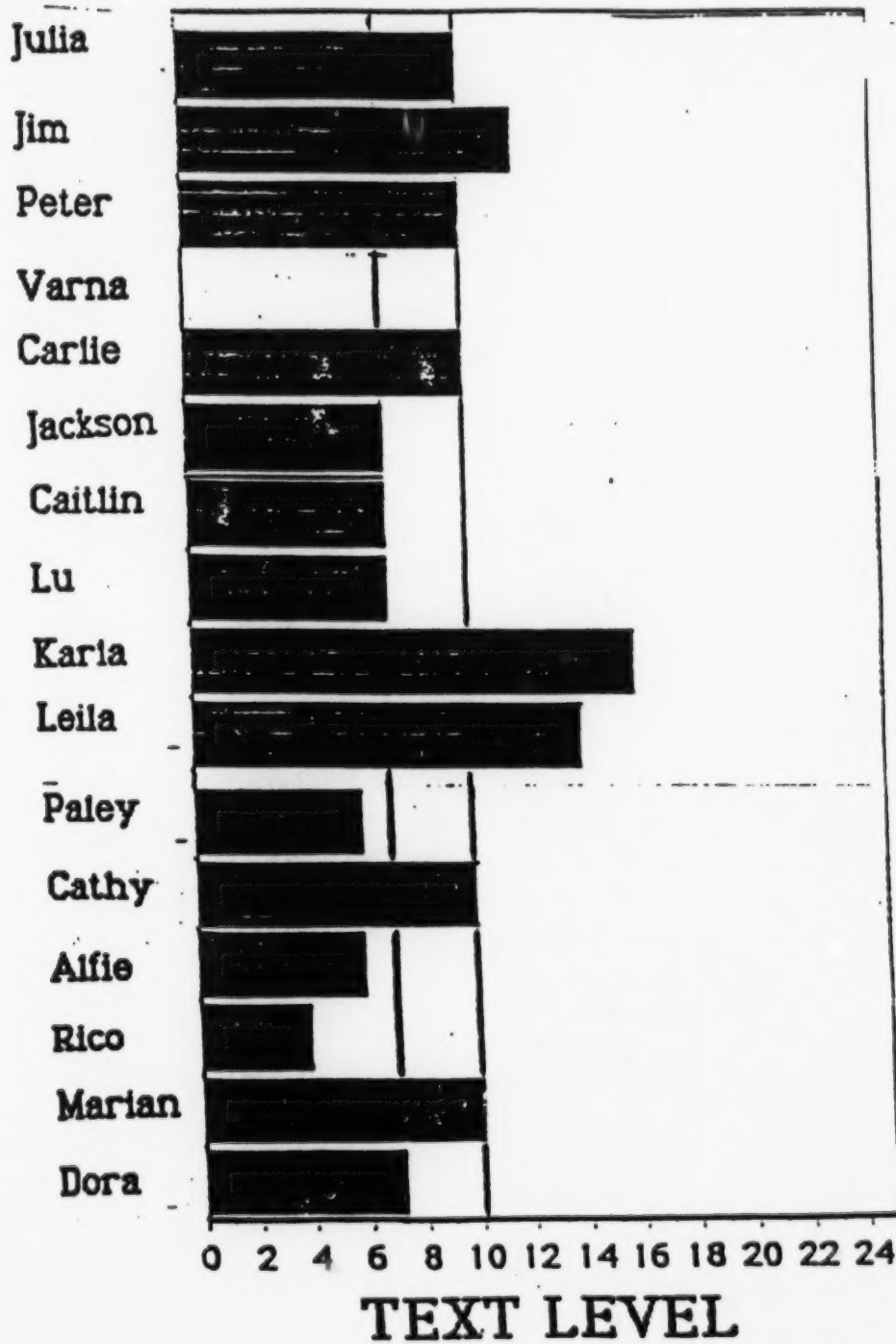
IV. (optional) Concepts about print show that there is almost as much variation among children, in their knowledge about print, at the end of kindergarden as there are children in the class. All children make progress. In grade one, they are still spread out. However, some children not reading well in first grade will become really competent readers by fifth or sixth.

IV. Conclusion

We believe that, metaphorically, we have to restate the basic question: When children come to school, rather than asking them "Can you do this or this or that?" ask them "Who are you and what do you know and what can you do?" Thereafter we can support them intelligently and appreciatively and keep track as they learn in their own ways. Perhaps then the gates can be thrown wide open to admit children of radically different abilities, characters and

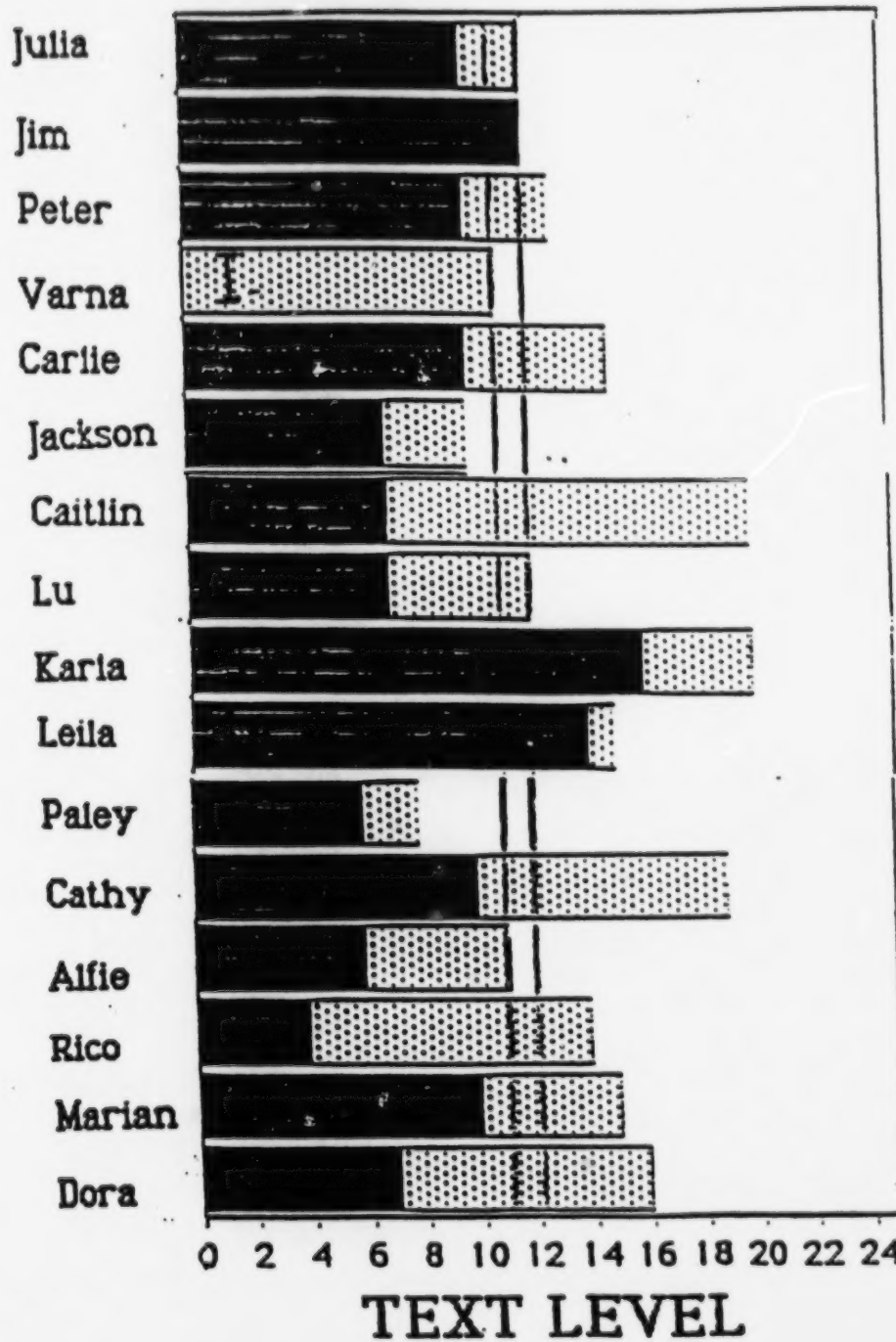
backgrounds--admit them all to the wonderful world of literature.

COHORT 82



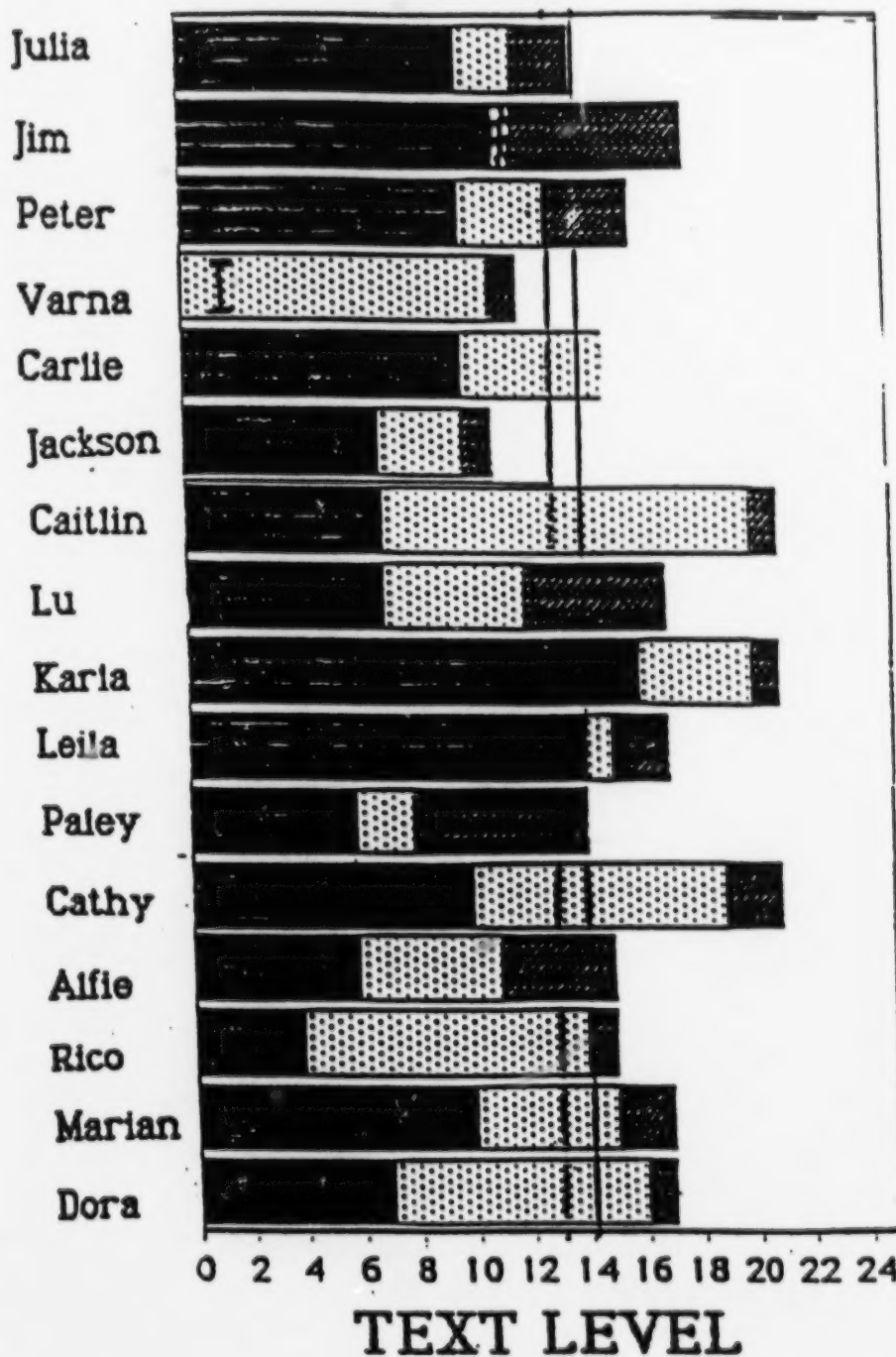
■ xlv 85

COHORT 82



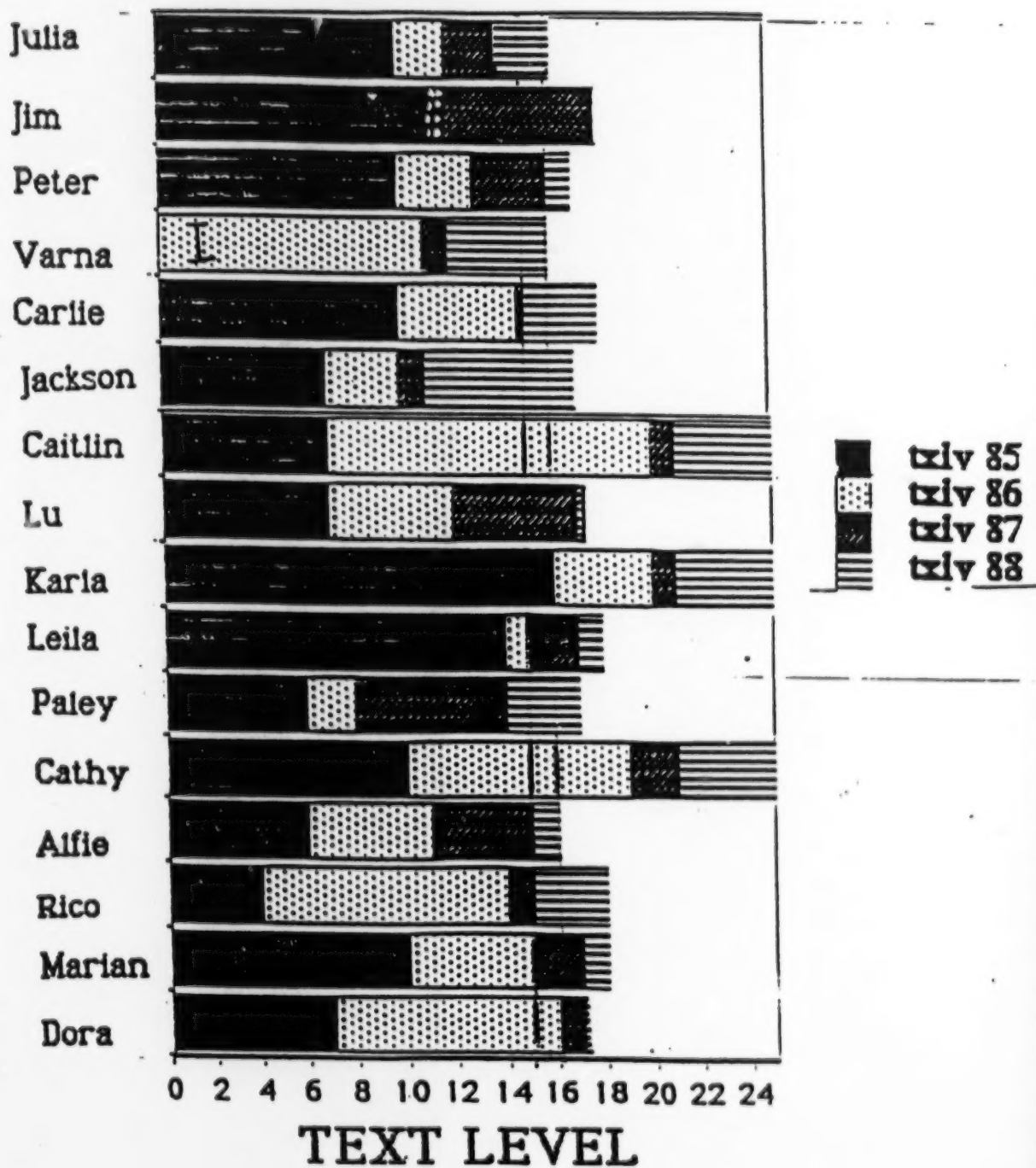
 txlv 85
 txlv 86

COHORT 82



txlv 85
 txlv 86
 txlv 87

COHORT 82



COHORT 82

